

Remarks by Donald C. Winter
Secretary of the Navy
USS FREEDOM (LCS 1)
Commissioning Ceremony
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Saturday, November 8, 2008

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, I am delighted to be with you today as we welcome into the Fleet a new ship, the first in its class—USS FREEDOM.

Today's day of triumph was achieved through perseverance and a determination to overcome many obstacles.

The challenge of building a totally new class of ship was formidable, and today's achievement represents a number of firsts.

The first Littoral Combat Ship.

The first warship built in Wisconsin since World War II.

The first time we have worked with the American Bureau of Ships to class a combatant.

The first U.S. warship designed to accommodate mission modules.

We have learned a lot along the way.

We have forged new relationships and established new partnerships.

It was not easy.

But I am convinced that we now have a very capable warship that fills a critical need.

Furthermore, LCS is a cost-effective warship, and I am looking forward to the day when we have all 55 LCS's in the Fleet.

I would like to thank the entire Navy-industry team for your efforts in bringing us to this critical point in the program.

Your long hours in making this warship sea-worthy and combat-ready have paid off.

Treasure this day, and walk proudly in the future as you read about the great achievements of USS FREEDOM in the years ahead.

It can now be said that while Wisconsin is famous for the Green Bay Packers, and Michigan famous for its Wolverines . . .

Well, OK, in most years, but let us not talk about that right now . . .

Anyway, with USS FREEDOM, you have now given the entire world an opportunity to see what Wisconsin and Michigan talent can do in building one of the world's most advanced and innovative warships!

Our Nation needs this ship.

We face challenges and threats in the littorals around the world.

From terrorists in small boats to mine warfare in vital waterways to diesel submarines deployed by hostile powers to pirates interdicting maritime commerce, the U.S. Navy faces a wide array of threats that must be countered.

USS FREEDOM—the first of many Littoral Combat Ships to come—will help us do so.

The global economy is highly vulnerable to maritime threats.

We saw that in April 2004, when terrorists attempted to attack an oil platform in the Northern Arabian Gulf.

The terrorists failed—but the attack sent oil prices and insurance rates soaring, even though no damage was done to the platform.

Today, we also see this vulnerability in the Nigerian Delta, where instability and threats are adding to the cost of critical energy resources.

And we have seen this vulnerability time and time again off the Somali coast, where ever more brazen pirates threaten, plunder, and terrorize merchant ships in innocent passage across international waters.

These developments threaten the Suez Canal trade route, and they represent a challenge to every nation that depends on maritime security for their prosperity and their survival.

With USS FREEDOM, we are responding to these threats.

In this platform, we are making the right investments in our future security and prosperity.

For those of you who will have the privilege of serving in FREEDOM, you will play a leading role protecting our Nation's interests, and in ensuring the stability of the global economy.

You will also be called upon to serve in a ship whose namesake defines the very

aspirations of the American people, and of people the world over.

Freedom is a powerful word.

Our Founding Fathers fought a war to achieve it; generations of Americans overcame many challenges to defend it; and tens of millions of immigrants have come to our shores to experience it.

We take our freedoms as our national birthright—the freedom of religion, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, the freedom to petition our government for a redress of grievances.

We understand freedom to mean that we have the right to chart our own course in life, to pursue our dreams, and to voice our opinions freely, without fear of reprisal.

Our freedom is a precious gift—and we must defend it.

As President Dwight D. Eisenhower stated, “History does not long entrust the care of freedom to the weak or the timid.”

Our Nation now entrusts the care of freedom to those who serve in this great ship.

USS FREEDOM will be called upon to go in harm’s way, and to defend the freedom that previous generations have passed on to us.

From every corner of the globe, and from every port of call, let freedom ring.

May God bless this ship, the Sailors who serve in her, and may God continue to bless America.